



Health  
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Santé et  
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Canada

Government  
Publications

CAI  
HW145  
-C13

## CHOOSING A DAY CARE SERVICE

☐ The Day Care Centre

☒ The Day Care Home



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Published by authority of  
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## INTRODUCTION

Children respond to their total environment. They are particularly influenced by the people around them — both adults and other children. Thus, the selection of the individual with whom one places pre-school children, and careful attention to her entire home environment, are of great importance.

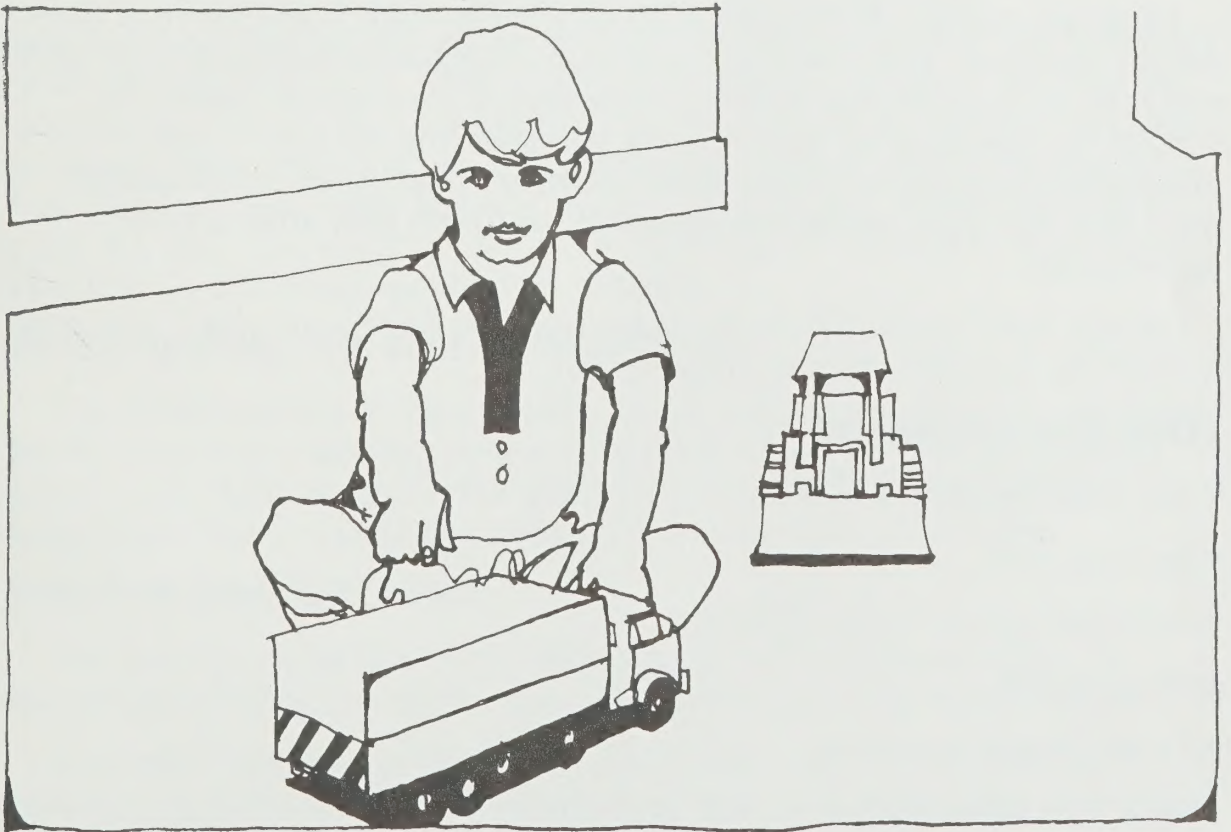
Well established relations between parents, child and the day care mother are important. After all, the child will be spending a good part of the day in this new environment.

This booklet, another in the day care series, has been published by the National Day Care Information Centre, the Canada Assistance Plan Directorate, National Health and Welfare for the use of parents who are planning out-of-home care for their child and have decided that the day care home answers their family's needs. The parents should also read the other half of this booklet which deals with the day care centre, before they make their final decision.

## THE DAY CARE HOME

### WHAT IS IT?

A day care home is one that is selected by the parents to give regular care to their child while the mother is working or absent for other reasons. This type of care is the most common in Canada for children of working mothers, and will likely remain so for the foreseeable future.



## **WHAT ARE ITS COMPONENTS?**

The day care mother's personality, her house, her husband, her own children and other children for whom she cares during the day are the main features to consider when selecting a day care home.

## **LOCATING THE DAY CARE HOME**

You will no doubt wish to get in touch with your own community sources for a start. Many cities have established day care centres, and these are often well known. However, some have established additionally or independently a family day care program. Under such a program, a social or governmental agency recruits, assesses and supervises day care homes. These provide personal, quality care for children while parents are working or absent.

If such a program is not available, the provincial or municipal social service department, welfare information service or the local public health nurse may help you find a day care home.

Neighbours, clergy, local citizen committees, school principals, local bulletin boards, and newspaper advertisements may give you additional leads.

## **THE IDEAL LOCATION . . . near your home or near your work?**

There are many advantages to finding a day care home in your own neighbourhood. Your child will not have transportation problems, and will remain in a familiar setting. Moreover, if your older child is in school he may be able to join your younger one for lunch and after-school activities. When your younger child enters kindergarten the same day care home may be used for lunch and after-school supervision.

On the other hand, if the day care home is near your work, you may be able to visit the child during the day.

## **YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS**

Your child needs someone . . .

- he can trust
- who genuinely likes children
- and who will
- make him feel secure
- give him individual attention and comfort





- provide a stimulating environment.
- set a balance between active and quiet play
- encourage individual creativity and social interaction.

Every one of us, during our lifetimes, forms many close relationships. Each time we form a new one, the depth of the previous ones remains the same. This is even truer of our children. Parents are anxious to provide their child with an opportunity to cement the first of many close relationships by choosing a warm-hearted and loving day care mother. Some parents worry unnecessarily when their child calls the day care mother “mummy”, perhaps in imitation of her own children. A child knows his own mother.

### **INTERVIEWING THE DAY CARE MOTHER**

The interview brings best results when held at the day care mother’s home. You will meet her in the environment where you propose to place your child. Some of the questions can be settled over the telephone, but a visit to her home is essential to any decision.

### **THE EXPLORATORY VISIT**

The usefulness of this first visit depends on asking the right questions and observing the day care mother and her environment.

Naturally, you are seeking a warm-hearted day care mother to provide your child with individual attention and good care. Once you

have found such a person, there is no reason why you should not establish a friendly relationship with her. However, you must not forget that you are becoming the consumer of a service and are about to enter into a business relationship. Some persons have found it useful to write down, in contract, the various details of the agreement with the day care mother.

*The following may be used as a check list when interviewing the day care mother:*

- **Children in the day care home**

Find out the number of other children who will be cared for in her home. The number is sometimes limited by provincial regulations. In any case, the number should not be excessive. Most authorities suggest that a day care mother should not care for more than three children other than her own, and not more than five children including her own.

The age of the children is also important. She should care for no more than two children including her own under the age of one.

- **Health**

Find out about the state of health of the day care mother. She should be physically and mentally fit. Caring for children requires stamina. She should be willing to provide a statement of health from her doctor indicating that she is sufficiently fit to care properly for children. Enquire (with discretion) about the physical and mental health of her husband, her own children and other children she cares for.

- **Language**

Children may have difficulty becoming accustomed to the new day care home if they do not speak the same language as the day care mother. If this is the case, you should pay more attention to the day care mother's ability to communicate. Additionally, you could provide her with a list of simple words the child understands.

- **Child rearing practices**

Discuss your educational goals and disciplinary methods. While the day care mother should have similar ideas to yours, she might use methods corresponding better to her own personality. However, she should relate to your child in a manner consistent with your own approach to avoid confusing them.

If she has a TV set, point out to her the interesting programs for your child and establish limitations. Discuss length and conditions for outside play, choice of educational toys and games.

- **Physical and environmental aspects**

The day care home should be safe, healthy and comfortable.



### Safety:

- safe indoor and outdoor play space
- no fire hazards
- medicines and other dangerous chemicals, and unsafe objects out of the reach of children
- safety gates at stairways if the child is at the crawling stage.

### A healthy environment:

- well lighted
- well heated
- well aired
- clean
- good kitchen facilities
- domestic animals clean, vaccinated, healthy (and few in number).



### Comfort:

- enough room
- quiet corners
- rest and sleeping arrangements
- storage space for equipment.

- **Illness**

Decide what type of care your child will be able to receive in the day care home if one becomes ill or indisposed. Is the day care mother willing to care for a child if he or she has a cold, fever, other illness?

You should make emergency arrangements as soon as possible for those occasions when the day care mother cannot look after your child.

The day care mother should be instructed to never give medication of any sort to the child without specific instructions from the parents.

- **Fees**

At the very first visit you should establish the type of service you feel your child should be receiving and the price of this service. When should you pay (every week or once a month)? How much should you be charged for additional meals or hours of care? What deductions will you make when the child does not go to the day care home? Find the answers now. Settle the type of payment (by cheque or cash). Will the day care mother provide you with receipts? This is an important matter since working mothers can deduct up to \$500 a year per child on their income tax forms for child care expenses.

- **Husband**

Does the day care mother's husband mind his wife caring for the child in their own home?

Are his working hours such that he has to sleep at home during the day? In such a case, will your child be kept quiet in order not to interfere with his sleep? Matters of this sort should influence your decision.

- **References**

If you don't know the day care mother well, ask her to give you letters of reference or a list of persons you can call.

- **Termination of service**

Set right away the length of notice (a week or two) to be given at the time when either the day care mother or you decide to terminate the day care service.

## **BRING YOUR CHILD TO THE DAY CARE HOME**

After establishing a tentative agreement with the day care mother, bring your child to her home to find out how they get along. This will also give the child an opportunity to become familiar with his new environment. However, do not expect your child to respond immediately to the day care mother.





On this occasion provide the day care mother with the following (preferably in writing):

- name and phone number of your doctor
- phone numbers of the parents at home and at work
- phone number of a relative or friend who can be reached if the parents are not available
- list of allergies and forbidden foods
- your child's routine: meals or feedings, snacks, rest periods, toilet training, cleaning of teeth.

Explain your child's temperament, his stage of development, his problems, likes and dislikes.

Give the day care mother the assurance that you trust her and that you will support her efforts to care for your child. If she feels that she has your confidence, she will be franker with you. She will feel more at ease to share the day-to-day details of your child's existence, including the minor and not-so-minor problems.

Keep the day care mother informed of events that can influence the child's behavior at her home. Explain what the child eats at breakfast and supper and decide what type of a mid-day meal will insure him a well balanced diet. List what you prefer the child to have for meals and snacks.

## **FINDING AN ALTERNATIVE**

If the day care mother cannot continue to care for your child, you are faced with three alternatives:

- find another day care home,
- consider a day care centre,
- or hire a sitter for your own home.

Change is always difficult for a child. The introduction to a second home has to be considered with the same attention as to the first one. Moreover, the new day care mother has to be told of the child's first experience, either good or bad. Be as sure as possible that the new woman can look after your child on a long term basis. Too many changes can be harmful.





- Do the quiet, shy children receive their share of attention?
  - What form of discipline is used?
  - Are there enough activity areas to keep the children occupied (crafts, building blocks, etc.).
  - Is the overall atmosphere conducive to free activity, joy, development, creativity, etc.?
- We hope that your child will benefit from his new experience in a day care centre.





- What is the teacher-child relationship?

## 6. General Observations

- If the children can dress themselves, are they allowed to go outside to play whenever they wish? Or is there set outdoor supervised play time?
- Do children of all ages mix on the playground?
- Is there a sand box, slides? Climbing material.
- Is there space for children to play, run, etc. that is free from swings and slides?

## 5. Outdoor Space

- Does each child have his or her own towel and washcloth?
- Are the toilets and basins child size? Located near the playground?

## 4. Bathroom

- What are the arrangements in case of an accident or medical emergency?
- What medical or first aid training does the staff have?
- Is there an isolation room where children can be separated if they become ill?

## 3. Isolation Room

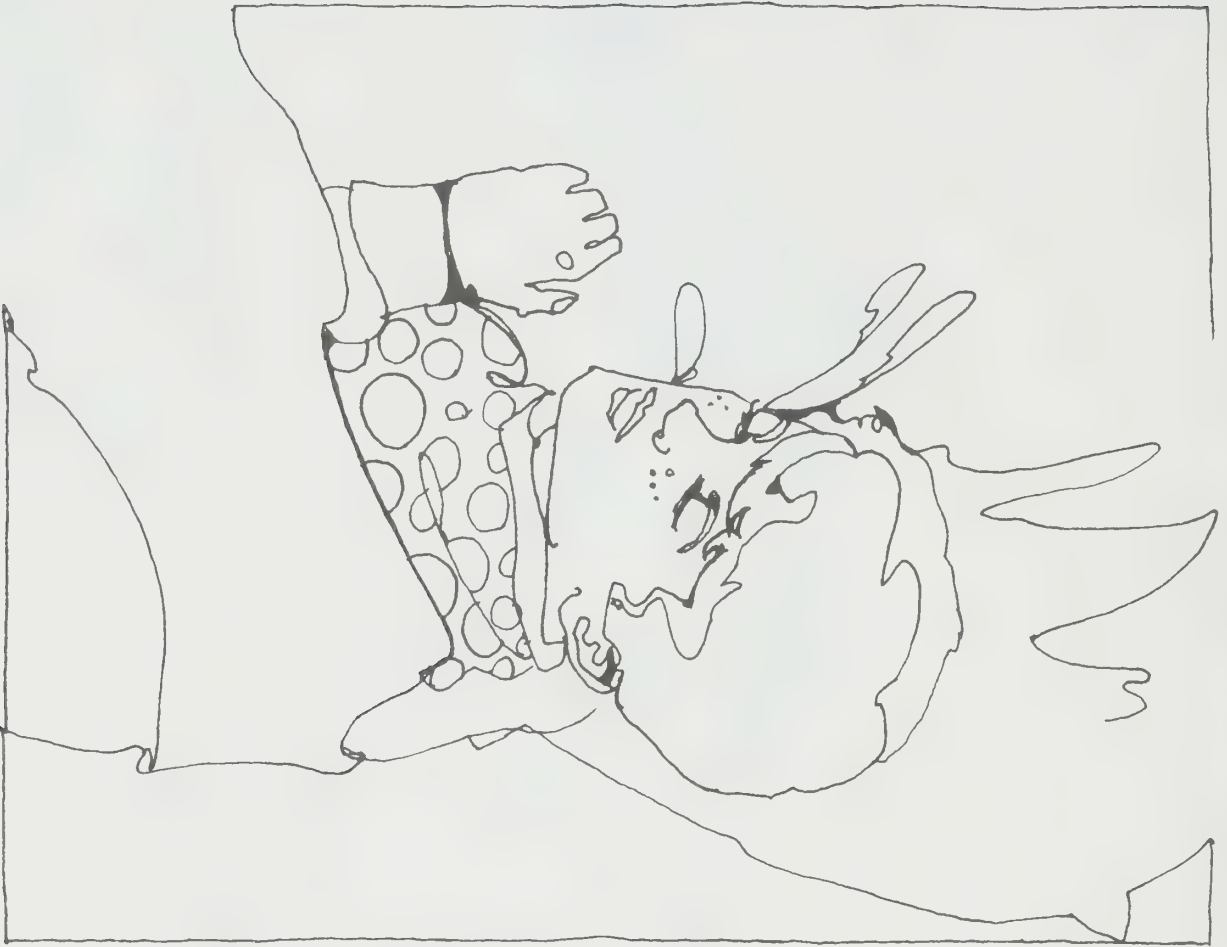
*Following is a check list to follow while visiting the centre:*

## **1. Playrooms**

- Are the rooms pleasant and colourful?
- Are there pictures on the wall?
- Is there enough space for the children to run and play?
- Are there enough toys so that each child can play?
- Are the toys suitable to your child's age?
- Is there a variety: puzzles, crafts, books, blocks, climbing apparatus, moving toys, dress-up corner, a quiet (book) corner, a play kitchen area?
- Is there a stimulating atmosphere — pianos, record player, mobiles, bulletin boards, pets?
- Is there child size furniture in addition to adult size furniture where staff can sit comfortably?

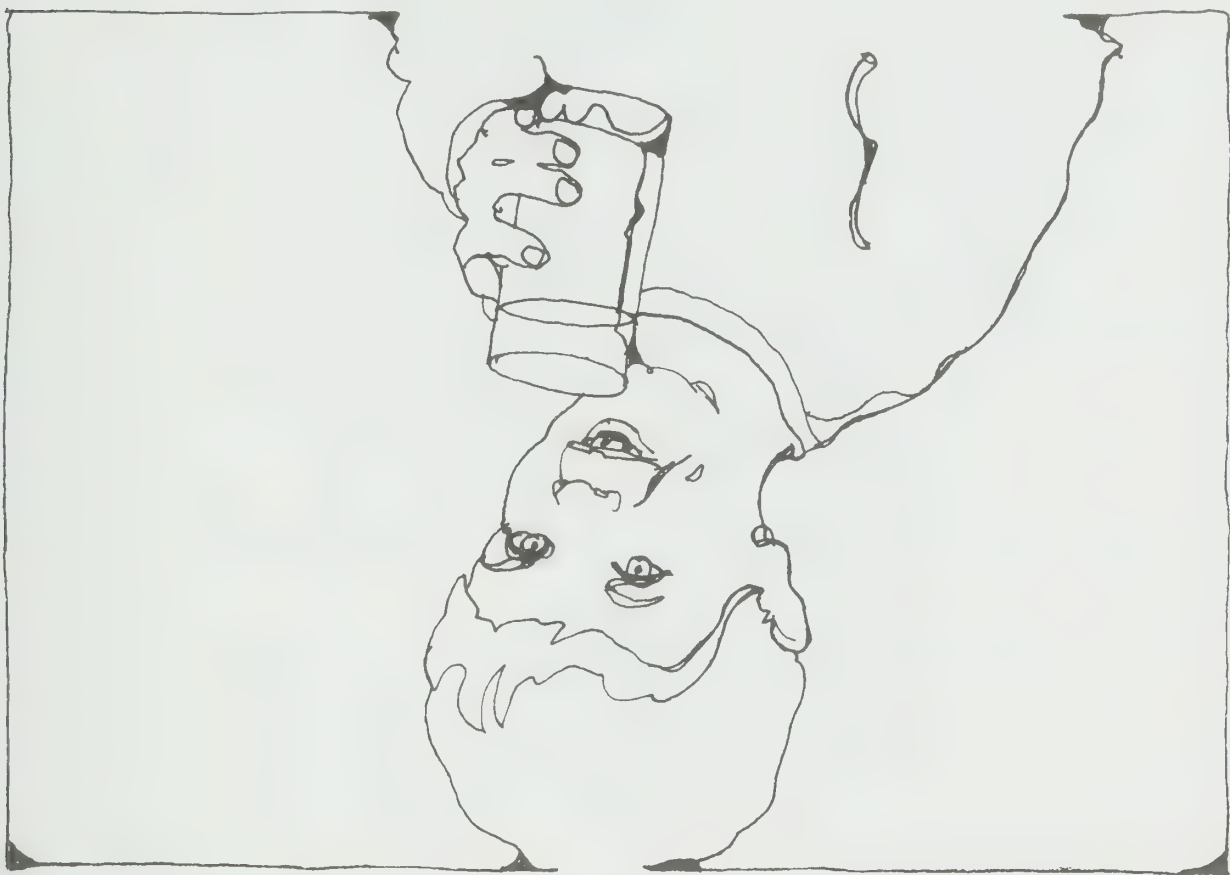
## **2. Rest Provisions**

- Does the centre provide for adequate rest periods? Does each child have a bed and a blanket?
- What are the arrangements for children who wake early?





- Are there allowances made for children with special dietary needs or problems?
  - You will need this information in order to plan a balanced diet for your child each day.
15. What types of meals and snacks are provided?



- The children should be able to relate in a consistent basis to the same familiar adults. This is especially important for a centre which relies heavily on the services of volunteers.

14. What about staff?

- Is there any flexibility in case of emergency? Is the centre available at the hours when your child needs care and supervision outside your home?

13. What are the hours of the centre?

- What are the fees? Good day care is expensive; however, there are subsidized centres that charge on a sliding scale according to the parents' ability to pay. Is there a fee if child is absent due to parents' holidays or child's illness? Is the fee reduced for the second and third child enrolled from the same family? Is there transportation service? What is the cost?

2. How many children are in the same age group as my child?
  - As your child becomes older he can relate to larger groups more readily. The maximum usually recommended is: 10 two-year olds, 15 three-year olds and 20 four- and five-year olds.
3. What is the number of total staff (kitchen help, clerks, child care workers)?
  - A ratio of 1 staff (total) to 7 children is usually recommended.
4. What number of staff will work in direct contact with the age group of your child?
  - See your provincial legislation for ratios.
  - Check to see if ratio is increased by part-time or volunteer workers.
5. What is the training and experience of the staff?
  - The staff ideally should have nursery school or child care training. Check the ratio of untrained staff – it should be a small number and they should be involved in a training program on a part-time basis.
6. How is the centre run and organized?
  - (By a board of directors, by the owner.)
7. What roles are parents expected to assume in the running of the centre?
  - Ideally parents should be encouraged to participate in the running and organizing of the centre.
8. Are there regular staff-parent consultations about the child?
  - What are the discipline procedures?
9. What are the discipline procedures?
  - It is important to discuss discipline procedures with the Director in order to minimize misunderstandings and inconsistencies between the centre's philosophy and yours.
10. What is the daily schedule? Is it flexible or rigid?
  - For example are children able to nap when they are tired or during set times? The flexibility of the schedule is often related to the number of staff available.
11. What arrangements are there if your child becomes ill during the day?



is financial assistance available through a joint federal-provincial and municipal plan, for low income families who require assistance in paying day care fees.

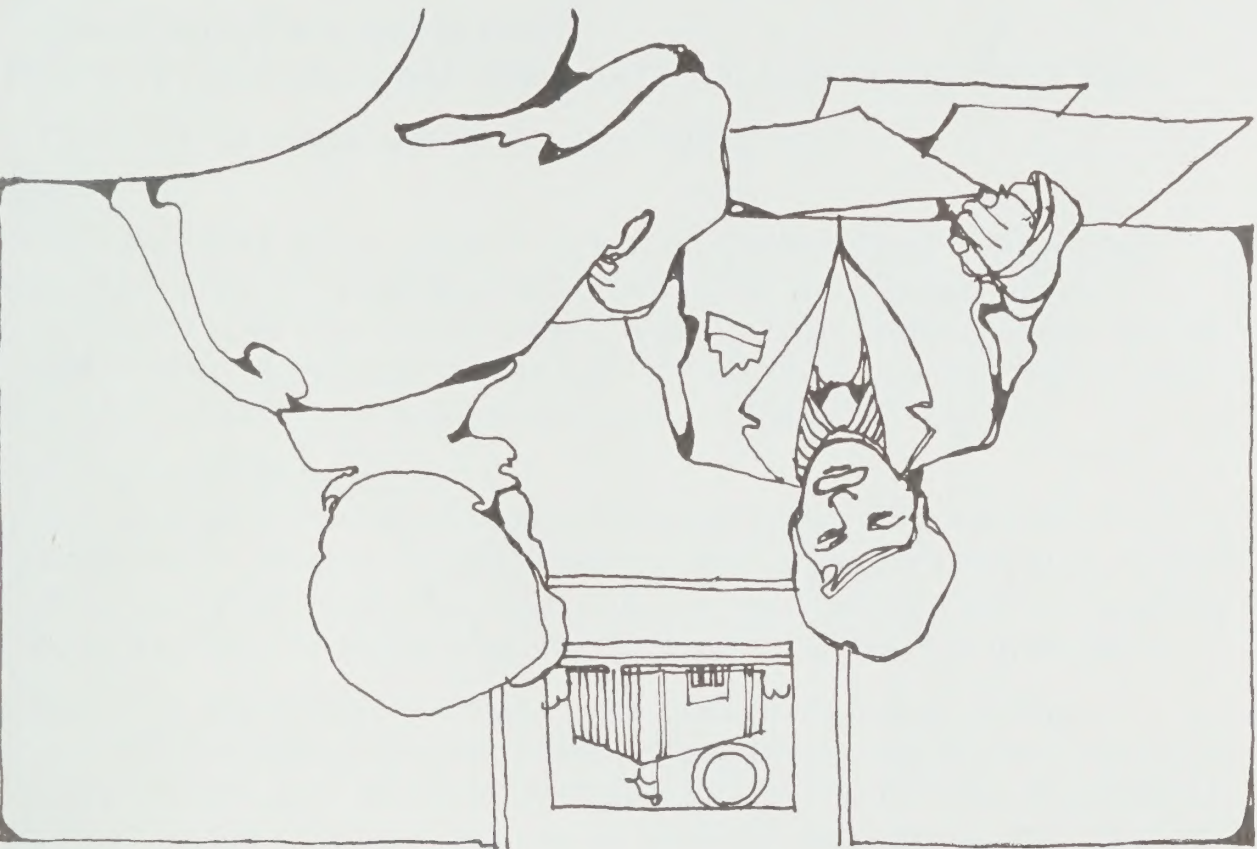
4. Is there a waiting list?

5. What are the age restrictions of the centre? (Many centres do not accept infants, toddlers or schoolage children who attend kindergarten or grade school and who require half day or lunch and after-school care).

6. Are parents allowed to visit the centre and meet with the Director and staff?

7. Ask for an application form and any written information about the centre.

If the Day Care Centre meets your criteria of distance, fees, enrollment age and existing standards arrange an interview with the Director and a visit to the centre.



*A possible list of questions to ask the Director:*

1. How many children are enrolled?

• Judge the number of children enrolled in relation to both indoor and outdoor space.

## INTRODUCTION

Children respond to their total environment. They are particularly influenced by the people around them — both adults and other children. Thus the selection of the centre where one places pre-school children are of great importance.

Well established relations between parents, child and centre are important. After all, the child will be spending a good part of the day in this new environment.

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## THE DAY CARE CENTRE

After you have decided that out-of-home care is the type of care that will best meet the needs of your family and of your child, and you have chosen group care in a day care centre rather than care in a family day care home for your child, how do you decide in which day care centre you will enroll your child? Where can you get information about the available day care centre? What points should you check to assure you that a day care centre has high quality standards?

First of all, you can obtain information about existing centres from your community social planning council, your municipal or provincial department of welfare or the United Appeal headquarters in your area. It is advisable to check existing legislation, licensing standards, and practices in your province.

These comments are aimed at parents of preschool children. Requirements for quality infant care are different. If your child is very young (less than two years of age), consult your pediatrician or family doctor and discuss with him the advantages and drawbacks of a particular group care program for the development of your infant child.

*Information to check during the first phone call:*

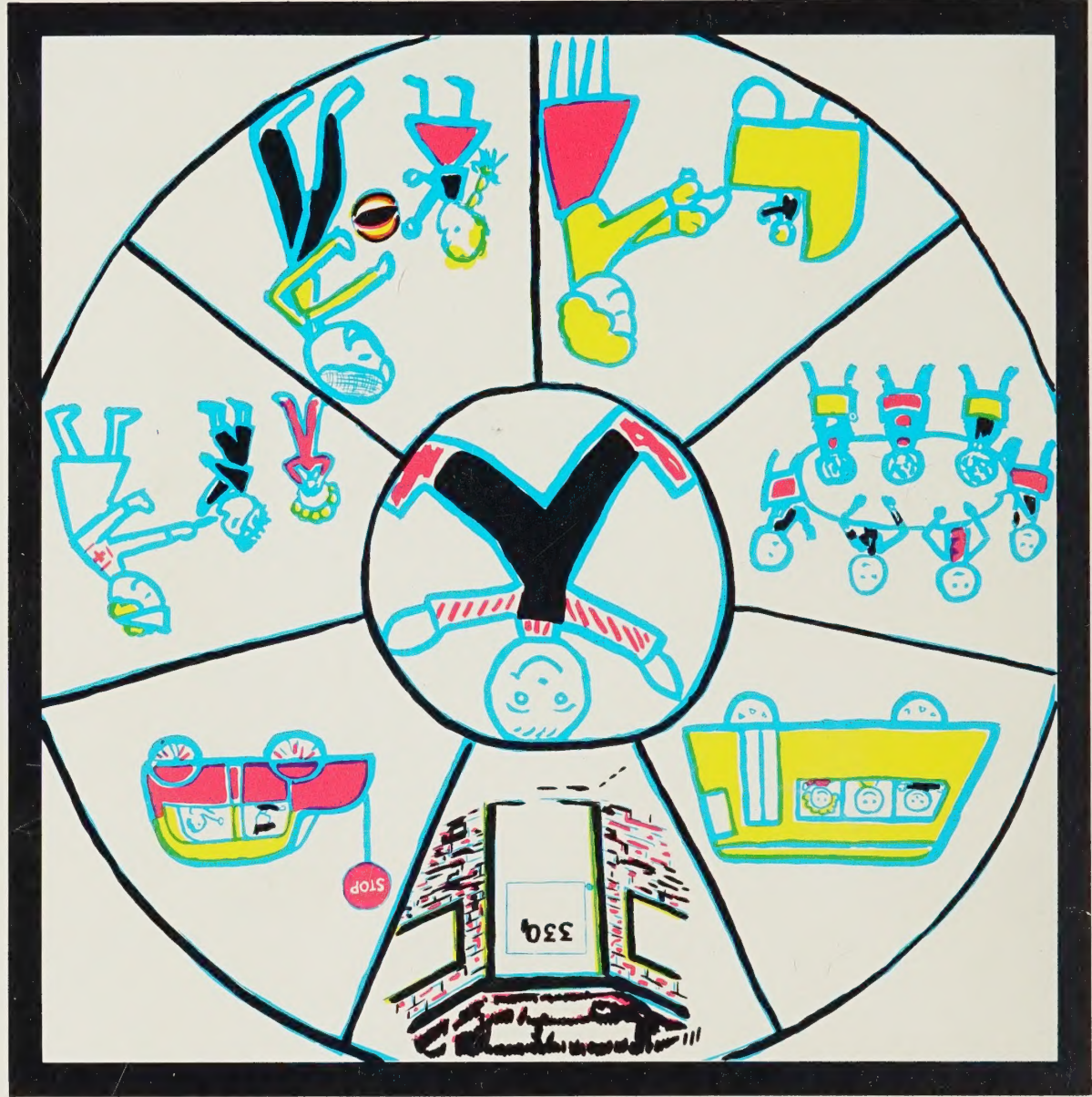
1. Does the day care centre meet local and provincial health, fire, zoning and space requirements?

2. Is the centre easily accessible by walking, by bus or by car?

3. Inquire about the weekly fee schedule. If your family income is low, inquire into the possibility of subsidization. In many provinces there



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[9-31]

